



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

PAC 2020-002: Section 17.05 Review of a temporary public art installation in the form of a road mural, consisting of the phrase "Black Lives Matter," located on East Grace Street, between North 9th Street and North 8th Street.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: September 21, 2020

PETITIONER

Anedra Bourne, Venture Richmond

PROJECT LOCATION

800-900 block of E. Grace Street near the Virginia State Capitol/Capitol Square, a half block from Richmond's City Hall, and adjacent to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The state's Office of the Attorney General/Barbara Johns Building, St. Peter Catholic Church and the Federal Courts Building also line this block.

PROJECT PURPOSE

Venture Richmond seeks to bring further attention to the Black Lives Matter movement in an effort to demonstrate support and to show solidarity with other major downtowns such as Minneapolis, MN; Charlotte, NC; Washington, DC; Denver, CO, Seattle, WA; Tulsa, OK; Brooklyn, NY; and soon Baltimore, MD. Venture Richmond would like Richmond to join this list of trailblazers, while encouraging more people to continue to come downtown.

SUMMARY

Background:

As stated by the petitioner, the Black Lives Matter Mural would be a way to demonstrate external support to Richmond's broader community, especially the Black community, and show that many stand with them in support of an end to racial inequality and injustice and to encourage efforts toward equity and inclusivity. The location of the proposed project offers a varied history near buildings that house both state and local government and offers the chance for many passersby to encounter the artwork and visit other public art at the Capitol Square. "Jefferson's Capitol" and exterior grounds have welcomed Civil War generals, the first African Americans to hold office in Virginia, served as the backdrop to major motion pictures, and celebrated the nation's first-elected Black governor. Pedestrian traffic in this area is strong, especially on days of worship as well as during the General Assembly Session.

Correlation to Public Art Master Plan:

- Involves temporary "commissions" (p 8)
- Encourages community-based involvement in a public art project (p 7 & 8)

On August 14, 2020 the Public Art Commission recommended approval of the project's conceptualization and location with the following qualifications:

- The project meets all DPW permit requirements.
- The PAC will consider future design modifications should Venture Richmond move forward with its proposed "Adopt a Letter" initiative.

The project was heard by the Planning Commission on August 17, 2020 and approved with the conditions recommended by the Public Art Commission. On September 8, 2020 the Planning Commission held a closed session pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(8) to consult with legal counsel regarding what legal consequences, if any, might follow from the Commission's design and location approval of a Black Lives Matter mural on City right-of-way. Immediately after the closed session, the Planning Commission voted to reconsider this project.

Staff Contact:

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